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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/758,157	01/15/2004	James F. Popelka	PP06385US00	4846
22885	7590	07/17/2008		
MCKEE, VOORHEES & SEASE, P.L.C.			EXAMINER	
801 GRAND AVENUE			WAGGONER, TIMOTHY R	
SUITE 3200				
DES MOINES, IA 50309-2721			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3651	
			MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
			07/17/2008	PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

### Office Action Summary

**Application No.**

10/758,157

**Applicant(s)**

POPELKA, JAMES F.

**Examiner**

TIMOTHY R. WAGGONER

**Art Unit**

3651

**Period for Reply** -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 April 2008.  
2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.  
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 and 13-52 is/are pending in the application.  
4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.  
5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.  
6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 and 13-52 is/are rejected.  
7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.  
8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.  
10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).  
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:  
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.  
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)  
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-8508)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_  
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_  
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application  
6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1,20,30,40 and 50 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claims 20-24,27-29 and 40-52 directed to the apparatus and claims 1-19 and 30-39 directed to the method of using the apparatus are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitten et al USPN 6,732,014 in view of Balch USPN 5,113,130 and further in view of Gray USPN Re. 33,668.

(Re claim 20)"a first support upon which is mounted a set of optical emitters" (310A figure 3A). "a second support member upon which is mounted a set of optical detectors" (350B figure 3B). "a controller operatively connected to each emitter and detector" (335A ,325A, 365B figure 3A,B). "an interface adapted for communication of the output signal" (325A,365B figures 3A,B).

Whitten does not disclose all emitters having a beam spread which can be sensed by all the detectors.

Gray teaches a light curtain which has a plurality of emitters and detectors where all the detectors on the opposite side from the emitters sense all the emitters.

It would be obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the dispenser of Whitten to include emitters with a wider beam spread so all detectors can receive the signal because it provides more complete coverage over an opening.

(Re claim 21) "the first and second support members comprise a circuit board" (360B figure 3B).

(Re claim 22) "perimeter dimensions that do not exceed several inches by one-half foot" (figure 7).

(Re claim 23) "there are five emitters" (720 figure 7).

(Re claim 24) "there are five detectors" (725 figure 7).

(Re claim 27) "controllers is a microprocessor" (325A and 365B figure 3A,B).

(Re claim 28) "output signal is communicated to a interface to a master controller board of a vending machine" (130 and 150 figure 1).

(Re claim 29) "a vending machine" (205 figure 2).

(Re claim 40) "a set of several emitters spaced apart on one side of a vend area" (242 figure 2). "a set of several detectors spaced apart on another side of the vend area" (252 figure 2). "a microprocessor operatively connected to each emitter and detector" (235 figure 2). "a program ... monitoring for a vend" (figure 1).

(Re claim 41) "a timer to time on and off of the emitters" (325A,375B figure 3A,B; processors control the timing and of all processes).

(Re claim 42) "a timer to time on and off of the emitters" (325A,375B figure 3A,B; processors control the timing and of all processes).

(Re claim 43) "a modulator to modulate the electromagnetic energy of the emitters" (325A,375B figure 3A,B; processors control emitters levels keeping them in the infrared band).

(Re claim 44) "signal is adapted for communication to a vending machine" (130,150 figure 1).

(Re claim 45) "signal is adapted for communication to a master controleler board of a vending machine" (130,150 figure 1).

(Re claim 46) "the signal turns a transistor on or off" (the signal from Whitten is capable of this).

(Re claim 47) "the signal operates a relay" (the signal from Whitten is capable of this).

(Re claim 48) "with a vending machine" (205 figure 2).

(Re claim 49) "vending machine is a snack vending machine with multiple rows and columns" (205 figure 2).

(Re claim 50) "a dispensing area" (222 figure 2). "a master controller controlling dispensation of vendible products" (220 figure 2). "a set of several emitters on one side of the vend area" (242 figure 2). "a set of several optical detectors on another side of the vend area" (252 figure 2). "a microprocessor operatively connected to each emitter and detector" (235 figure 2). "a program ... monitoring for a vend" (figure 1).

(Re claim 51) "initialization of on and off times for the emitters" (106 figure 1).

(Re claim 52) "initialization of on time for the generated signal" (130 figure 1).

Whitten does not disclose that the detectors are monitored while all emitters are off to see if there is a false positive and if so report the error.

Balch teaches turning off the emitter and monitoring the detector for false positives and reporting this error.

It would be obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the system of Whitten to include the step of monitoring for false positives while all emitters are off because it improves reliability.

(Re claims 1-10, 13-19 and 30-39) These claims are all directed to a method of use of the apparatus as indicated by applicant's representative. Whitten/Balch anticipates all the limitations of the apparatus as claimed and therefore would be capable of performing the methods as claimed.

Claims 25 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitten. With respect to claims 1-10 and 13-52, Whitten does not disclose specific values for detector and emitter spacing. However, one of ordinary skill in the art is expected to routinely experiment with the parameters, especially when the specifics are not disclosed, so as to ascertain the optimum or workable ranges for a particular use. Accordingly, it would have been obvious through routine experimentation and optimization, for one of ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the spacing of 1 inch as claimed by applicant through routine testing.

### ***Conclusion***

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP

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§ 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to TIMOTHY R. WAGGONER whose telephone number is (571)272-8204. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thu 8am-2pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gene Crawford can be reached on (571) 272-6911. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Gene Crawford/  
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art  
Unit 3651

TRW